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AUTHOR Gross, Thomas S.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Counseling center directors at colleges in the state of Maryland were asked to rate the importance of several selected functions of their counseling centers. The functions rated were: (1) psychological problem counseling; (2) reading and study skills assistance; (3) testing; (4) academic advisement; (5) college orientation; (6) evening student counseling; (7) assistance with selecting graduate schools of study; and (8) health. Questionnaire results were compared across several categories to determine similarities and differences among schools. Generally, the data support the belief that counseling centers, as service agencies for institutions, emphasize those needs that best serve the institution with which each is affiliated. (Author/PC)

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An Analysis of the Importance of Selected Functions of Counseling Centers in Public Colleges in the State of Maryland

Dr. Thomas Grosso, Assistant Director of Counseling, University of Baltimore, Maryland
Dr. William D. Caswell, Instructor, Math Department, University of Baltimore, Maryland

Counseling Center
University of Baltimore
1420 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

CAPSULE STATEMENT

Counseling center directors were asked to rate the importance of several selected functions of their counseling centers. The results were compared across several categories to determine similarities and differences.

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Anyone who has been involved in college counseling for any length of time is aware of the great diversity of outlooks, styles, and functions in public college counseling centers. It would probably not be an exaggeration to state that no two college counseling centers, like fingerprints, are exactly alike.

The University of Baltimore, a private four-year institution of long standing will be absorbed into the Maryland State College system in 1975 as an upper division University. This will mean many changes in functions and outlooks. As a place to start, the Counseling Center desired to know what functions were performed by public college counseling centers in the State of Maryland. The results obtained present an interesting description of what Maryland college counseling centers do and the importance attached to the various functions.

THE METHOD

A questionnaire was sent to directors of counseling centers at the three branches of the University of Maryland, seven state colleges, and sixteen community colleges, asking them to rate functions as of major importance, minor importance, or no importance. The functions rated were: psychological problem counseling, reading and study skills assistance, testing, academic advisement, college orientation, evening student counseling, assistance with selecting graduate schools of study, and health. Space was provided for listing other functions. The number of counselors and students at each school was also requested, along with the position of the counseling center in the college's table of organization.

All three branches of the University of Maryland responded as did all

seven state colleges and thirteen community colleges. All responses were based on data from the Fall 1973 semester.

RESULTS

Table 1 identifies the twenty-three schools that responded to the survey and includes information that is important to the primary mission of the survey. All responding colleges indicated that the counseling center reported to someone designated as a senior student personnel officer, except Catonsville Community College which reported to the President in lieu of a Dean of Students.

The ratings in the survey were quantified by assigning the number 5 to the rating major importance, 3 to minor importance, and 1 to no importance.

The number 4.7 in the Psychological Problem Counseling column, Table 2, is the mean rating of psychological problem solving as rated by the seven state schools. All other statistics in Tables 2 through 6 were calculated in an analogous way.

Table 2 compares the importance of our eight functions as rated by the three branches of the University of Maryland, the seven state schools, and thirteen of the sixteen Maryland community colleges. The magnitude of the statistics and the importance of the functions vary directly; i.e., the higher the statistic, the more important the function. All statistics in the remaining tables are interpreted analogously.

Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 compare the importance of the same eight functions as rated by two and four year institutions, resident and non-resident institutions, institutions with large and small counseling staffs, and institutions with small and large enrollments.

The most pronounced differences among the eight functions using the

most areas of Table 2 occur in academic advisement, evening student counseling, and health. Using the categories of Table 3, the greatest differences among the functions occur in academic advisement and evening student counseling. The categories of Table 4 reveal the greatest differences occurring with the same functions as in Table 3. This result is to be expected because the categories of Table 3 are almost identical to those of Table 4. All the two-year institutions are non-resident and Coppin State College is the only four-year institution which is a non-resident school. In Table 5, the greatest difference occurs in psychological problem solving, with those institutions having less than ten counselors rating their function higher than institutions having ten or more counselors. The categories in Table 6 indicate the greatest difference among the eight functions occurs in health.

CONCLUSIONS

The authors' conjecture that the higher rating given to both academic advisement and evening student counseling by the community colleges (as observed in Tables 2, 3, & 4) is due to the type of student enrolled at the community colleges. For example, many students at the community colleges are enrolled in programs that are vocationally oriented. We believe that careful advisement is an essential ingredient in such programs. Further, because of a proportionately large number of evening students, the community colleges would quite naturally be more committed to evening student counseling than those institutions which have proportionately less evening students.

Generally speaking, the data in Tables 2, 3 and 4 support the belief that counseling centers, as a service agency for the institution, emphasize those needs that best serve the institution. In other words, the services

relative importance of those services offered by the counseling center are determined by the unique needs of the institution and its students.

The results from Table 5, that those institutions with less than ten counselors rate psychological problem solving higher than those institutions having ten or more counselors is, at first glance, a curious result. One might have predicted just the opposite.

The data in Table 1 reveal that generally, those institutions having ten or more counselors also have student enrollments of 5,000 or more. Hence, these institutions may offer psychological problem solving services through the campus health service, (or other agencies) with the counseling center becoming involved only tangentially; where as at the smaller institutions (less than 5,000) the counseling center may have to carry the burden of psychological problem solving.

That health receives more emphasis from counseling centers at small institutions than large institutions (as found in Table 6) might indicate that large institutions also have another agency, such as a health center, which deals specifically with this problem, where as schools with small enrollments may have only a nurse whose functioning is related to the counseling center.

The idea to use results of the survey as the nucleus of this article was generated by an unusually good response. If the original intention had been to perform a statistical analysis, the answers on the questionnaire would have been solicited in a quantitative rather than a qualitative manner. However, even acknowledging this problem, the authors believe the results are of interest and would stand up under replication.

TABLE 1

Descriptive Information Supplied by Responding Institutions

College	Type	Enrollment[1]	Number of[2] Counselors
University of Maryland - College Park	4 Year-Resident	34,000	18
University of Maryland - Balto. County	4 Year-Resident	5,000	7
University of Maryland - Eastern Shore	4 Year-Resident	900	1
Bowie State College	4 Year-Resident	2,000	3
Coppin State College	4 Year-Non Res.	2,800	5.5
Frostburg State College	4 Year-Resident	2,900	5
Morgan State College	4 Year-Resident	4,200	12
Saint Mary's College	4 Year-Resident	1,100	4
Salisbury State College	4 Year-Resident	1,700	1
Towson State College	4 Year-Resident	10,500	5.5
Allegany Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	1,300	3
Anne Arundel Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	3,500	3
Catonsville Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	7,600	10
Cecil Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	800	1.6
Charles County Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	1,400	2
Chesapeake Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	900	4
Community College of Baltimore	2 Year-Non Res.	7,000	10
Dundalk Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	1,200	4
Essex Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	5,300	14
Frederick Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	1,100	2
Hagerstown Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	1,500	4
Montgomery Community Co. - Rockville	2 Year-Non Res.	8,000	20
Prince George's Community College	2 Year-Non Res.	10,000	10

[1]Rounded to nearest hundred

[2]Full-time equivalency

Comparison of Eight Selected Functions by Five Categories

TABLE 2	Psychological Problem Counseling	Reading and Study Skills Assistance	Testing	Academic Advisement	College Orientation	Evening Student Counseling	Assistance with Selecting Graduate Schools and Graduate Fields of Study	Health
University of Maryland	5.0	3.0	4.3	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
State Colleges	4.7	3.9	4.4	3.6	4.1	3.3	3.9	3.6
Community Colleges	4.1	3.9	3.6	4.8	3.5	4.4	3.2	2.5
TABLE 3								
Four-Year Institutions	4.8	3.6	4.4	3.6	3.8	3.2	3.6	3.4
Two-Year Institutions	4.1	3.9	3.6	4.8	3.7	4.4	3.2	2.5
TABLE 4								
Resident	4.8	3.4	4.3	3.4	3.7	3.0	3.4	3.1
Non-Resident	4.1	4.0	3.7	4.8	3.9	4.4	3.1	2.7
TABLE 5								
Staff-Ten or More	3.7	4.3	3.7	4.7	4.3	4.3	3.[illegible]	2.7
Staff-Less Than Ten	4.6	3.6	4.1	4.2	3.8	3.9	3.[illegible]	3.0
TABLE 6								
Enrollment Less Than 5000	4.5	3.8	3.9	4.3	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.4
Enrollment 5000 or More	4.2	3.8	4.0	4.2	3.5	4.0	3.0	2.0